

STAFF STUDY

Prepared by the Management Staff

Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration

MEMORANDUM FOR: A - LR. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service

This memorandum has been prepared in accordance with your request that A/IS examine the present functions and membership of the Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service. Particular attention has been given to the relationship of BEX to the planned expansion of the FSO category and implementation of other provisions of the directive to be issued pursuant to the Rowe Report.

Competition for Foreign Service appointments by written examination, administered by a body similar to BEX, has been looked upon for more than 50 years as a basic guarantee of a career service free from political influence. The Foreign Service Act of 1946 first established a statutory base for the BEX, providing that the Board of Examiners shall "in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary and under the general supervision of the Board of the Foreign Service, provide for and supervise the conduct of such examinations as may be given to candidates for appointment as Foreign Service officers in accordance with provisions of Sections 516 and 517, and to any other person to whom an examination for admission to the Service shall be given in accordance with this or any other Act." (Section 212).

The membership of the Board of Examiners is not specified in the Act except for the provision of Section 212(b) of the Foreign Service Act that "the membership of the Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service, not more than half of which shall consist of Foreign Service Officers, shall be constituted in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary". The present membership includes five representatives of the Department of State, four of whom serve ex officio, and representatives of the Department of Labor, Commerce, Agriculture, and the Civil Service Commission. A listing of the present membership and biographic sketches of other agency representatives is included as Tab A.

Sitting as a consultative body, BEX determines examination and selection policies for the Foreign Service Officer category. The Executive Director of BEX, with the assistance of a small staff, performs the actual operations required to carry out the examination program. The Educational

Testing Service grades the essay portions of the written examination on a contract basis. Oral examinations are conducted by the Executive Director with the assistance of a group of Deputy Examiners chosen annually by the Board of Examiners. Although an effort is made to secure adequate representation on the oral examining panels from the BEX member-agencies, Deputy Examiners are chosen primarily on a personal basis for their skill in oral testing.

The Board of Examiners has delegated to the Chief of FP by formal resolution responsibility for the administration of Foreign Service examinations except those required by Sections 516 and 517 of the Foreign Service Act.

An Advisory Committee on the Foreign Service examinations, consisting of public members with special competence in this field, assists the Board of Examiners in the preparation and review of the examination program. Membership of the Advisory Committee is attached as Tab B.

The problem presented by BEX and its staff is one of integration of their operations with the recruitment programs of the Department and the Foreign Service. BEX discharges its limited function, involving a high degree of public interest, with administrative propriety. It is not oriented, however, to give optimum service to the growing personnel needs of the Department. There are a number of steps which can be taken immediately within the present organizational framework to produce a better integrated recruitment program. Among these are:

- (1) Re-alignment of the Departmental representation in the BEX, which is now too heavily weighted with PER officers, to provide for greater participation by officers with experience in and familiarity with the functional and operating areas of the Department.
- (2) Establishment of provisions for adequate representation of Departmental interests on the oral Examining Panels.
- (3) Preparation of precepts for the Examining Panels each year, reflecting the personnel needs of the Foreign Service.

The long term solution of the problem of developing a sound and coordinated recruitment program, however, requires a basic regrouping of recruitment and examination functions within the Office of Personnel. The Rowe Report contains several recommendations concerning this aspect of personnel management, many of which are applicable under the modified provisions of the directive:

- (1) Development of a long term inventory of personnel needs as the basis for a positive recruitment program;

- (2) Modification and study of the FSO examination to provide for increased emphasis on the Social Sciences and specialized aspects of foreign affairs through (a) use of subject-matter options; (b) development of practical methods for determining qualities of emotional stability in candidates; and (c) consideration of the use of language aptitude testing in addition to achievement tests.
- (3) Increased emphasis on Departmental recruitment at the junior professional grades through such devices as an expanded Intern Program.
- (4) Strengthened selection and examination procedures for the FSS category.
- (5) Adequate provision for lateral entry into the Foreign Service through liberalization of Section 517 recruitment.

The present dispersion of recruitment and examination functions is not conducive to the development of a positive and coordinated program envisioned by the Report. There is now added reason to stress effective recruitment because of two circumstances not contemplated by the Committee. First, the Department is not accepting the recommendation of the Committee for an amalgamated Foreign Affairs Service. The basis for a fuller interchange between the Department and the field in future years, however, can be laid now by a careful program of recruitment and executive development, which will bring to the Department in increasing numbers young people adequately trained and oriented to dual-service careers. Secondly, the Department is facing a period of increasing manpower shortages, and is already encountering serious difficulty in recruiting adequate numbers of qualified personnel for its staffing requirements. It is consequently of great importance to provide the organizational basis for a vigorous and aggressive recruitment program.

There are a number of alternatives available to deal with this problem, each of which should be carefully explored before any definite action is recommended. At first glance, the course of action which appears to offer the greatest benefits would be consolidation of the recruitment and examination functions presently conducted by DP, FP, and BEI into a single Division of Examinations and Recruitment in PER. This change would be consistent with the recommendation of the Rowe Report that PER be reorganized on a functional basis, and would provide a single focus for the formulation and execution of an aggressive recruitment program consistent with the requirements of the Department and the Foreign Service.

Under such an arrangement, the Board of Examiners would be reconstituted in a purely advisory capacity, and probably should be restricted to State Department membership. Representation should include PER, and 3 or 4 members selected annually from the operating bureaus and functional offices of the Department. Policy decisions of significant concern to the Foreign Service should be cleared interdepartmentally through the Board of the Foreign Service.

The Advisory Committee on Foreign Service Examinations would continue at the discretion of the Chief of the Division of Examinations and Recruitment to provide advice in matters of policy or examination techniques for junior-grade recruitment to both the Departmental and Foreign Service.

Charles E. Johnson